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more. He has grown to be a man and a deliverer. Go out into the world! Find his footsteps and follow them. Work, as he did, for the redemption of mankind. Suffer as he did, if need be, derision and obloquy. Make your protest against tyranny, meanness, and injustice!"

The weapon of Christian warfare is the ballot, which represents the peaceable assertion of conviction and will. Society everywhere is becoming converted to its use. Adopt it, O you women, with clean hands and a pure heart! Verify the best word written by the apostle—"In Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, but a new creature," the harbinger of a new creation!

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## THE ASSAULT ON WOMANHOOD \*

By LYMAN ABBOTT

IF I believed that the suffrage was the right of women, or would protect their rights, or would promote their interests, I should ardently favor it. For I seek to represent, and I believe that I do represent, a great silent constituency—the wives, the mothers, the daughters, who neither strive nor cry, and whose voice is not heard in the streets. If I fail in my undertaking, I ask their indulgence to one who, as son, husband, and father, has a triple reason to give them honor.

I am an advocate of woman's rights: her right to an open door to every vocation, her right to a fair opportunity for the highest and broadest education, her right to do whatever she can do and be whatever she can become; her right to determine her own appropriate sphere, not to have it determined for her by a lord and master; her right to be left free to follow the bent of her own divinely endowed nature, unchecked by vexatious restrictions, uncoerced by the presence of needless economic necessity, undiverted by the ill-judged appeals or the unfeminine sneers of her mistakenly ambitious sisters.

The book of Genesis gives two accounts of the creation of man, one in the first, the other in the second chapter. One represents man first made and woman added to be his helper and his subject. The other represents man and woman made in one act of creation, equally in the image of God, equally his children. What is popularly known as the Woman's Movement is a movement from one of these conceptions to the other—from the conception that woman was made as an afterthought

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to be a helpmeet to man, to the conception that neither alone, but both together, constitute the image of God. John Stuart Mill's monograph on "The Subjection of Woman," published in the first half of the nineteenth century, at once describes and interprets this movement. It was a necessary corollary to the awakening passion for liberty in France, England, and America. Under the inspiring leadership of noble, though possibly not always wise, men and women, it has achieved great things, not only for women, but for the human race. It has removed old and hampering legal restrictions. It has furnished much-needed protection to the wife from the cruelty of a sometimes brutal husband. It has opened the door to all—or nearly all—forms of productive industry, whether professional or manual. It has secured for woman the right to the best education, and opened to her the doors to the great educational institutions. And, above all, it has brought society, and pre-eminently American society, to recognize the fundamental fact that she is not a mere upper servant of man's household, not merely a cheaply paid nurse-maid of his children, not merely a vivacious parlor ornament for his home, not merely a minister to either his sensual pleasure or his spiritual repose; but a divinely endowed child of God, no more man's servant than man is her servant, no more created for him than he is created for her—she created for herself as truly as he is created for himself; each created for the other, both for God. The old resistance to this movement has disappeared; the old arguments against it are forgotten, or, like some ancient hieroglyphs, are regarded only as curiosities in literature. If there are any who desire to go back to the priestly conception of woman as a divine afterthought created to be the helpmeet of man, I am not one of them. My conception of the origin, function, and nature of woman, and of her relation to her divinely appointed comrade and her God, is all summed up in the words of the ancient Hebrew poet: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." It is summed up in the words of the modern English poet:

"Nor equal, nor unequal; each fulfils  
Defect in each, and always thought in thought,  
Purpose in purpose, will in will, they grow,  
The single pure and perfect animal,  
The two-celled heart beating with one full stroke,  
Life."

But no great movement in the world's history has been free from extravagances and excesses. The Reformation was accompanied by an individualism in religion from the baleful effects of which in sectarian

divisions the Church still suffers. The democratic uprising in the eighteenth century was accompanied by a political tendency toward anarchism which still enfeebles and sometimes paralyzes government and begets lawlessness alike in rich and in poor. The revolt against feudalism in the nineteenth century begat a spirit of selfish competition which sometimes to-day converts co-operative commerce into industrial war. It is not, therefore, strange that the movement for the emancipation of woman has been accompanied by extravagances which constitute nothing less than an assault on womanhood. And this assault is the more dangerous to society not only because it is always veiled behind fine phrases, but also because it has among its leaders women prompted by noble motives.

But neither the phrases nor the leadership should blind us to certain vicious tendencies.

From the premise that marriage is sometimes a species of bondage, reformers have concluded that it should be abolished. Divorce laws, originated to protect women from unhappy marriages, permit the dissolution of the marriage tie for any excuse or for none at all. Men have been divorced from their wives because the wife failed to sew on the husband's shirt buttons; women from their husbands because the husband did not take his wife to ride.<sup>1</sup> In at least one State the parties could be divorced whenever the judge thought they could not live happily together, and the courts usually left them to decide that question. As a divorce decree in one State is presumably binding in all, marriage in America has come perilously near marriage in pagan Rome, in which a husband or a wife could dismiss the other party to the contract as easily as in America a man can dismiss a gardener or a woman a cook; and there was no trade union to protect either party from unjust dismissal. How far this dissolution of the marriage tie has been carried is indicated by the fact that nearly a million divorces were granted in the United States during the last twenty years, that is 1,000 every week, or an average of 140 every day.<sup>2</sup>

This is not, however, liberty enough for our extreme reformers. Experimental marriage has been seriously proposed by one writer on the family, to be followed, after a year of trial, by a more abiding union or by separation and a new experiment. It is just to this writer to say that she does not advocate this reform, but intimates that it might be

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<sup>1</sup> See "Jesus Christ and Social Problems," Chap V, pp. 156, 157.

<sup>2</sup> The exact figures for the twenty years 1887-1906, inclusive, were 945,625, nearly two-thirds more than in the preceding twenty years, when the number was 328,716. See Special Census Report, spring of 1907.

better than the present practice. Some of the disciples of socialism go still further. They would abolish *meum* and *tuum* altogether from the family as well as from the market, and would allow no man to say *my* wife and no woman to say *my* husband. Free as the birds of the air? Freer; for the naturalists tell us that the birds live loyally with their mates in spite of occasional bickerings.

Nor can these views of liberty be lightly dismissed as those of cranks and faddists. Said Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1853: "A union of souls alone constitutes and sanctifies true marriage, and any law or public sentiment that forces two immortal, high-born souls to live together as husband and wife, unless held there by love, is false to God and humanity."

It is not, however, enough to free the wife from obligation to her husband, but the mother must also be free from obligations to the children. One popular woman lecturer, whose special ideal is the economic independence of women, argues for the millennial time when the wife will go to the office, store, or factory with her husband, to earn her wage as he earns his, while the children are put into an asylum or refuge, to be cared for by experts. Statistics have conclusively shown that the death-rate among orphans cared for by experts in asylums is greater than among the same class of orphans when adopted, under supervision, into private homes. The number of children in orphan asylums is insignificant compared with those in homes; but a recently published report in New York City shows that over 40 per cent. of the children in our reformatories come from orphan asylums. But when did a doctrinaire ever care for facts? The opening of all vocations to women has been followed by an inrush of women into industrial competition with men. Some find in this enlarged liberty an escape from what would otherwise be helpless poverty or ill-paid drudgery. They rightly welcome this relief from the conditions which Hood celebrated by his "Song of the Shirt." Some leave the mother to carry on unaided the daily routine of the household that they may earn pocket money for their unæsthetic luxuries. Some eke out the too scanty earnings of the husband by their own. Some—and these not a few—have crowded out the better paid work of their husbands and brothers, whose place as wage-earners they have taken, but who are quite incompetent to take the woman's place as home-builder. This competition in the labor market of women essaying the tasks which men formerly performed occasionally introduces into modern civilization old barbaric conditions. Landing at St. Thomas in the West Indies to take on coal, we watched the negro women carrying the coal in baskets from the yard to the steamer, while their husbands

either took the lighter task of filling the emptied baskets or idly watched with hands in pockets their economically independent wives do the work for both. I am told that the supercilious negro with high hat, kid gloves, and fancy cane, whom one more than occasionally meets upon the city street, is generally supported by some woman wage-earner, and that in the cotton mills of Massachusetts it is not infrequently the case that the woman is the wage-earner, while the man idly potters at home doing ill the woman's work. One result of this inrush into masculine employments by women has been a real and serious increase in the death-rate among women. In spite of generally improved sanitary conditions and a generally decreasing death-rate in the population, the mortality among women, at least in the city of New York, has increased at an appalling rate. The following table, quoted from a report of the Register of Records of the Health Department of Manhattan and the Bronx, I clip from the *New York Tribune* of December 7, 1908:

CIRCULATORY DISEASES			
Ages		1868.	1907.
15-19	.....	.19	.58
20-24	.....	.42	.45
25-29	.....	.51	.60
30-34	.....	.82	1.03
35-44	.....	.75	1.71
45-54	.....	1.05	3.17
55-64	.....	2.12	8.03
65 and over	.....	4.57	23.40
RESPIRATORY DISEASES			
45-54	.....	1.96	2.37
55-64	.....	4.72	6.65
65 and over	.....	14.59	20.85
CANCEROUS DISEASES			
35-44	.....	.75	1.22
45-54	.....	1.54	3.24
55-64	.....	3.13	5.34
65 and over	.....	4.86	6.90
URINARY DISEASES			
35-44	.....	1.19	1.34
45-54	.....	1.27	2.60
55-64	.....	1.24	4.91
65 and over	.....	3.70	12.57

I would not close one single door of industry to woman. I would not deny her industrial freedom. But I marvel at the shortsightedness of economic reformers who glorify woman's incursion into the ranks of clerical and manual employment as her coronation, and imagine that a

solution of our labor problem will ever come from a process which incites or drives the prospective wife and mother to underbid in the labor market her husband and her son, and pay for doing so by impairing her health and shortening her life.

I deny the economic independence of women, because I deny the economic independence of men. Economic independence is the hazy dream of an unintelligent doctrinaire. It has no existence except as a phrase on the pages of a book. The railway president is economically dependent on the trainmen; the trainmen are economically dependent on the president. The husband who works at the factory is economically dependent on the wife who works to prepare their meals at home. If they both go to the factory to work, they will become economically dependent on some one else whom they have hired to prepare the meal. We are all economically interdependent; the rich as much so as the poor, the men as much so as the women. The ambition for economic independence which drives the wife and mother from the home to the factory simply substitutes an interdependence purely economical for one that was inspired and sweetened by love.

While some so-called reformers are seeking, in the name of domestic emancipation, not to protect women in the family, but to dissolve the family, and other reformers, in the name of economic independence, are not merely demanding that all industrial doors shall be open to her, but are glorifying the industrial conditions which drive her reluctant feet to tasks in the field, the factory, and the mine, which she abhors, still other reformers, or the same, in the name of equality, are demanding that men shall put upon her burdens from which hitherto, by the universal consent of Christendom, she has been exempt. The phrase "right of suffrage" is a misphrase. Suffrage is an obligation; it is a right only as it is the right of every person to fulfil the obligation which is justly devolved upon him. The question of woman suffrage is not, Shall the women who wish to vote be allowed to do so? If that were the question, it might be adequately answered by the proposal of an ingenious friend of mine who suggests that the men who do not wish to vote assign their rights to the women who do wish to vote. There would be more than enough of unused masculine ballots to supply all the feminine demand. The real question is, Shall women be required to assume the duties and responsibilities of public life? It is certain that the majority of women have at present no desire to do so. Property-owning women and mothers can vote in school elections in New York State. It is authentically estimated that about 2 per cent. of them do so vote. In 1895 the women of Massachusetts were asked if they wished the ballot. Less than 5 per

cent. desired it. The other 95 per cent. were either opposed to the suffrage or indifferent. In Massachusetts, New York, Illinois, Oregon, recent movements for woman's suffrage have been defeated because of the opposition of women. In at least eleven other States similar defeats may be justly attributed to similar opposition. That women vote in States where they possess the suffrage proves only that they will conscientiously endeavor to fulfil any obligation which is imposed upon them. Mr. Taft and Mr. Hughes are both reported as saying that they are in favor of woman suffrage when the women want it. So am I. So are the great majority of men. Whatever ills might come from woman suffrage would be insignificant compared with the ills which would come from a great body of women, discontented because they thought themselves denied a right by men who desired to keep them in subjection.

The question of woman suffrage is therefore really one for the women themselves to determine. Whenever they wish the suffrage they will have the suffrage. At present they do not wish it. A few shrieking suffragettes are eager for it because they have entered the fray and want a victory. Some ambitious women are eager for it as an evidence of their political equality. Some philanthropic women believe that with the ballot they could accomplish moral and industrial reforms which now they can urge but not command. Some wage-earning women wish for the ballot as a symbol which they believe would secure for them in their vocation greater respect. These reformers have made their voices heard in the halls of legislation. The great body of silent women have until recently been without representation. The majority of these silent women pay as little attention to the advocates of woman suffrage as they would to the appeals of a recruiting sergeant in time of war seeking to form a regiment of amazons. They are so averse to public life that they will not even publicly protest against an endeavor to force them into public life. A few are really perplexed by the specious plea for political equality and by passionate appeals to their conscience to come to the help of the weak and the oppressed. The hysterical appeals of the suffragettes, the unfeminine appeals of the masculine women who wish that God had made them men, we may wisely disregard. I, for one, will not argue with them. But the serious-minded appeals to reason and conscience by serious-minded women who believe that the ballot in the hands of woman would elevate and educate her and would help to purify and redeem society deserve our serious consideration. To them and to their arguments, and to these alone, I address myself.

Equality applied to the sexes is as much a misphrase as economic independence. Women are not equal to men; men are not equal to



women. Equality and inequality are alike inapplicable to beings who possess different natures, to organs which possess different functions. Are the lungs equal to the heart? Is a yard-stick shorter or longer than half an hour? There was once a Joan of Arc. But no one would affirm that women make as good soldiers as men. I once knew a woman who could by her unaided strength lift a flour-barrel and put it on a wagon. But the steamship companies do not expect women to make good longshoremen. There are required in the hospitals some men nurses. But all physicians agree that, save where exceptional strength is needed, men are not equal as professional nurses to women. I have known a widowed father who cared for his motherless children, and did it well—for a man. But they were still motherless.

“She sets herself to man  
Like perfect music unto noble words.”

Which is superior in a song—the words or the music?

The question of woman suffrage is not a question of equality. It is a question of function.<sup>3</sup> The voters of America govern America. The ballot is a command. Do the women of America desire to take an active part in the government of America? Do they wish to command? I think not. And I will have no part nor lot in the endeavor to compel them to assume this duty which they do not wish to assume. Ought they to wish to take an active part in the government of America? Ought they to wish to command—their brothers, their husbands, their sons, or other women? I think not. And I will have no part nor lot in the endeavor to persuade them to do so. For they have a far greater function to perform, a far greater service to render, and one with which falsely called economic independence and falsely called political equality, if brought about, would tragically interfere.

Of that service I will speak in a succeeding paper.

[A second paper on this subject, written by Dr. Abbott, appeared in *The Outlook* for April 10.—ED.]

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\* “I believe that man and woman should stand on an equality of right, but I do not believe that equality of right means equality of function; and I am more and more convinced that the great field, the indispensable field, for the usefulness of woman is as the mother of the family.”—THEODORE ROOSEVELT.